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ABSTRACT

Stoltenberg's (1981) counselor complexity model, a developmental model of the supervision process, conceptualizes the training process as a sequence of four identifiable stages through which a trainee progresses: dependency, dependency-autonomy conflict, conditional dependency, and the master counselor. Evidence has been found in support of developmental models of supervision in general and of Stoltenberg's constructs specifically. This study investigated the degree of difference or agreement between supervisors' perceptions of trainees and their trainees' perceptions of themselves. Twenty pairs of supervisors and trainees rated the trainees on their perceived developmental level by completing the Supervisee Levels Questionnaire during the third week of the practicum and again at the end of the semester. A correlational analysis indicated a positive relationship between the trainees' ratings of satisfaction with supervision and their perception of developmental growth over the course of the semester. The results indicated that the larger the difference between the pretest and the posttest ratings, the greater the degree of satisfaction reported by the trainees. In addition, the greater the difference between the trainees' and the supervisors' initial perception of the trainees' development, the greater the subsequent satisfaction with the supervisor. (NB)

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A COMPARISON OF COUNSELING
SUPERVISORS' AND TRAINEES'
PERCEPTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

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A COMPARISON OF COUNSELING SUPERVISORS AND TRAINEES
PERCEPTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

Interest in developmental models of the supervision process has been increasingly demonstrated. Recently empirical tests of these models have attempted to assess their validity and potential utility for counselor supervision. One developmental model of the supervision process is Stoltenberg's (1981) counselor complexity model which conceptualizes the training process as a sequence of four identifiable stages through which a trainee progresses. Stoltenberg describes the developmental stages of the trainee as: the dependency stage, dependency-autonomy conflict, conditional dependency, and the master counselor. During this progression, issues surrounding increased autonomy and self-awareness, as well as application of acquired skills and theories, becomes salient for trainees. In addition, different motivations, needs, and sources of resistance of counselors at different levels of development are noted as a trainee acquires a more complete conceptual self-understanding and a more complex view of the counseling process.

Along with these levels of development, specific supervision environments are noted that are postulated to

stimulate and facilitate growth to the next higher level. Stoltenberg's (1981) counselor complexity model is based conjointly on Hogan's (1964) approach to supervision and Hunt's (1971) Conceptual Systems Theory, these environments reflect a decreasing need for structure and teaching on the part of the supervisor over a period of time, and an increasing movement towards collegiality within the supervision sessions.

Evidence has been accumulating in support of developmental models of supervision in general and of Stoltenberg's (1981) constructs specifically. This support has been primarily demonstrated in investigations of supervisor recommendations of appropriate environments for trainees of varying skill levels (Miars et al., 1983) and trainee perceptions of the differences and appropriateness of various supervisory behaviors (Cross & Brown, 1982; Heppner & Roehlke, 1984; Worthington, 1984).

In addition studies by Hill, Charles, and Reed (1981) and Reising and Daniels (1983) provide evidence for the changes in counselor behavior hypothesized by the development models. Stoltenberg's model (1981) has also been demonstrated in the degree of agreement between supervisors and their trainees in their initial perceptions of the level of the trainee's development and the optimal environment to be used in supervision (Stoltenberg, Solomon, & Ogden, 1986).

The present research extended the research by

Stoltenberg, Solomon, & Ogden (1986) by investigating the degree of difference, or agreement, between supervisors' perceptions of trainees and their trainees' perceptions of themselves in their initial ratings of the level of the trainee's development (third week of practicum) and the end of the semester. The perceptions of the supervisors and trainees were measured by the Supervisee Levels Questionnaire (McNeill, Stoltenberg, & Pierce, 1985), which is a self-report instrument designed to measure aspects of counselor development.

METHOD

Subjects

Twenty pairs of supervisors and trainees from three geographically diverse areas, the Southwest, Midwest and the Northeast, participated in the study, which was conducted over a sixteen week period. Including twenty supervision days. The trainees were volunteers enrolled in first and second year practicum in American Psychological Association accredited Counseling Psychology Programs. The mean age of the trainees was twenty-seven ($M = 27$). The mean age of the supervisors was thirty-five ($M = 35$).

Instruments

The SLQ, Supervisee levels questionnaire, is designed to tap characteristics on a continuum of development associated with the levels postulated by Stoltenberg (1981). The Supervisee levels questionnaire consists of

twenty-four self-report items chosen to reflect important counselor developmental constructs (e.g., "I depend upon my supervisor considerably in figuring out how to deal with my clients" and "I lack self-confidence in establishing counseling relationships with diverse client types"). The response format is a seven-point Likert scale with never and always as polar anchors. On the basis of the constructs of the counselor complexity model, the items are organized into three subscales of eight items each, reflecting self-awareness, dependency-autonomy, and theory/skills acquisition. The three subscales were summed to form a total supervisee level score. Higher scores reflect higher levels of development. The levels of development ranged from Level 1 -- dependent on the supervisor; Level 2 -- dependency-autonomy; Level 3 -- conditionally dependent on the supervisor; and Level 4 -- a "master counselor" as described by the Stoltenberg model (1981).

Procedure

The trainees were instructed to rate themselves according to where developmentally they perceived themselves to be. The supervisors were instructed to rate their perceived developmental level of the trainees. Responses were kept anonymous via subject coding procedures and supervision pairs were uninformed as to each other's responses. The supervisors

and trainees completed supervisee level questionnaires during the third week of the semester and again during the last week of the semester, constructing pre and post measures for the SLQ.

RESULTS

A correlational analysis indicated a positive relationship between the trainees' ratings of satisfaction with supervision and their perception of developmental growth ($p < .05$) over the course of the semester, as indicated by the SLQ. A particularly interesting finding was that a greater degree of satisfaction for the trainees positively correlated with the difference between the trainees and supervisors pre and post ratings on the SLQ ($p < .05$), indicating that the supervisors may have been more invested, and thus more committed, to supervision. Significant t -test values were found on the supervisee level questionnaire for Post-trainee and post-supervisor ($p < .05$). Significant t -test values were also found for: Pre-trainee and pre-supervisor ($p < .05$); post-trainee and pre-trainee ($p < .05$); post-supervisor and pre-supervisor scores ($p < .05$). Significant F values for person ($p < .05$) (supervisor and trainee) and for test ($p < .05$) (pre - SLQ and post - SLQ for the three subscales and the total SLQ ($p < .05$) were observed.

DISCUSSION

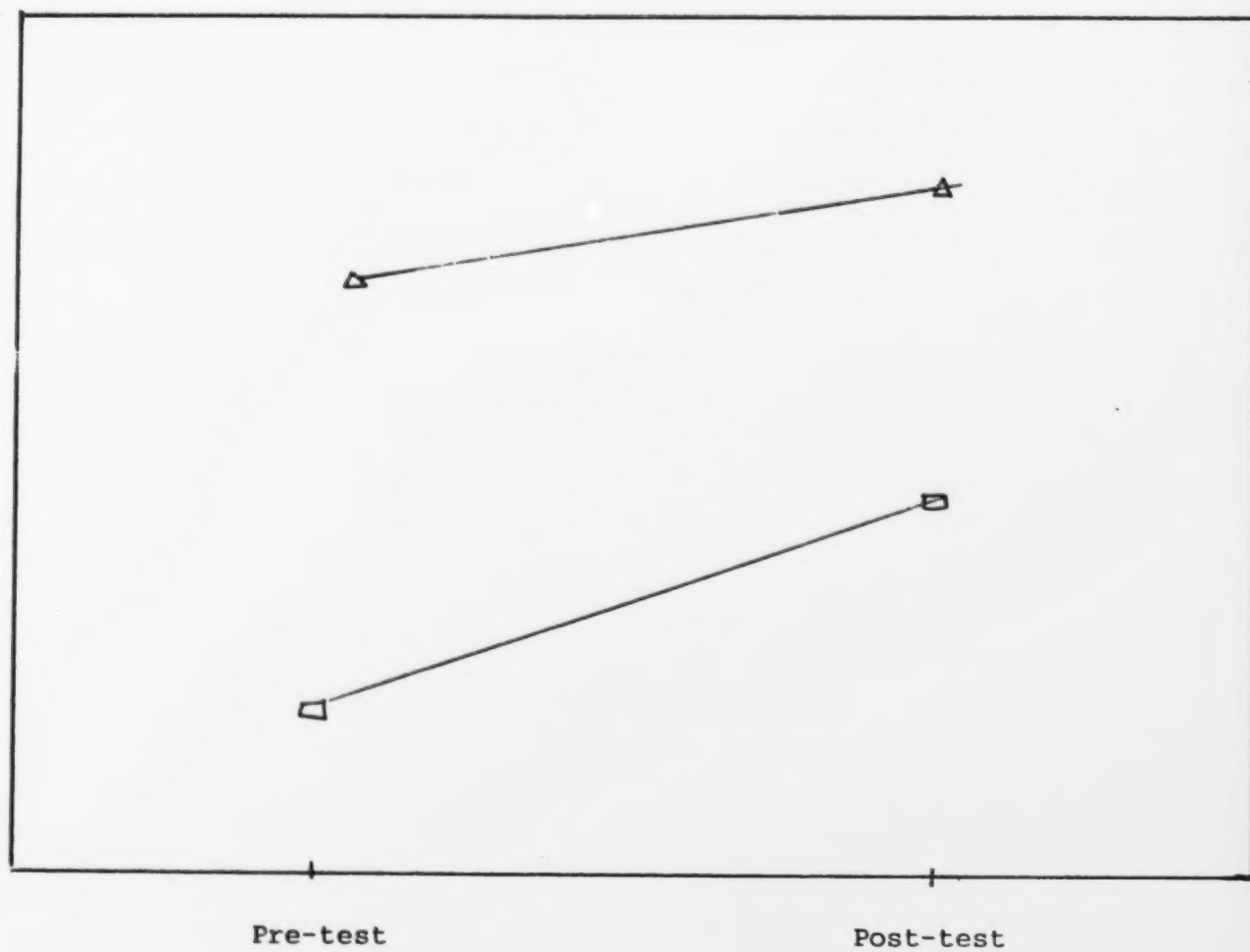
Results of the study indicate that the larger the difference between the pre-SLQ and the post-SLQ the greater the

degree of satisfaction reported by the trainees. In addition, the greater the difference between the trainees' and the supervisors' initial perception of the trainees' development, the greater the subsequent satisfaction with the supervisor. The supervisors perceived the trainees as having a lower developmental level initially, and rated the trainees as increasing their level of development as counselors by the end of the semester. Even though there was a significant difference between the supervisors' perception of the trainees and the trainees' perception of themselves, the trainees reported a high level of satisfaction with the supervision experience and with their supervisors.

The present results are consistent with the findings of Stoltenberg, Solomon, and Ogden (1986) in which trainees tended to rate themselves as more developed and requiring a higher supervision environment level than did their supervisors. However, as one might expect trainees, given their experience and perceived efficacy, gave themselves more relative credit for their abilities and, therefore, preferred more autonomy within supervision. The supervisors, on the other hand, may have been more aware of the need for trainee improvement and may have preferred to keep a bit more structure and remain more didactic during supervision. The high level of satisfaction reported by

the trainees with the supervision experience and their supervisors in this study may indicate that the supervisor is providing a more comfortable and less anxiety-ridden environment for the trainee to develop. The trainees reported satisfaction may also indicate that the supervisors were providing the trainee with sufficient support while they were encouraging growth towards increased complexity and greater autonomy.

Figure 1. Self-Awareness



□ Supervisor

△ Trainee

Figure 2. Dependency-Autonomy

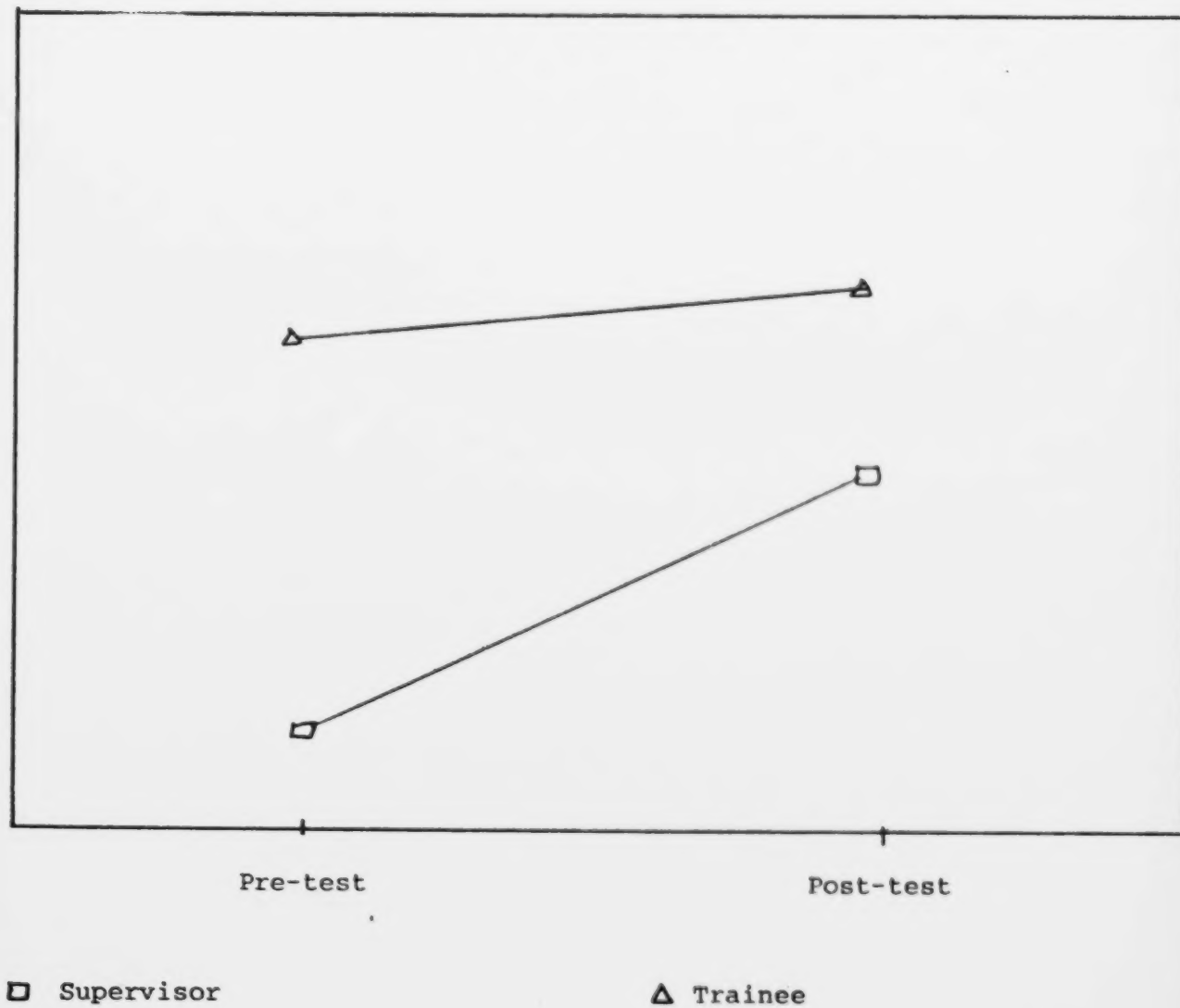


Figure 3. Theory Skills

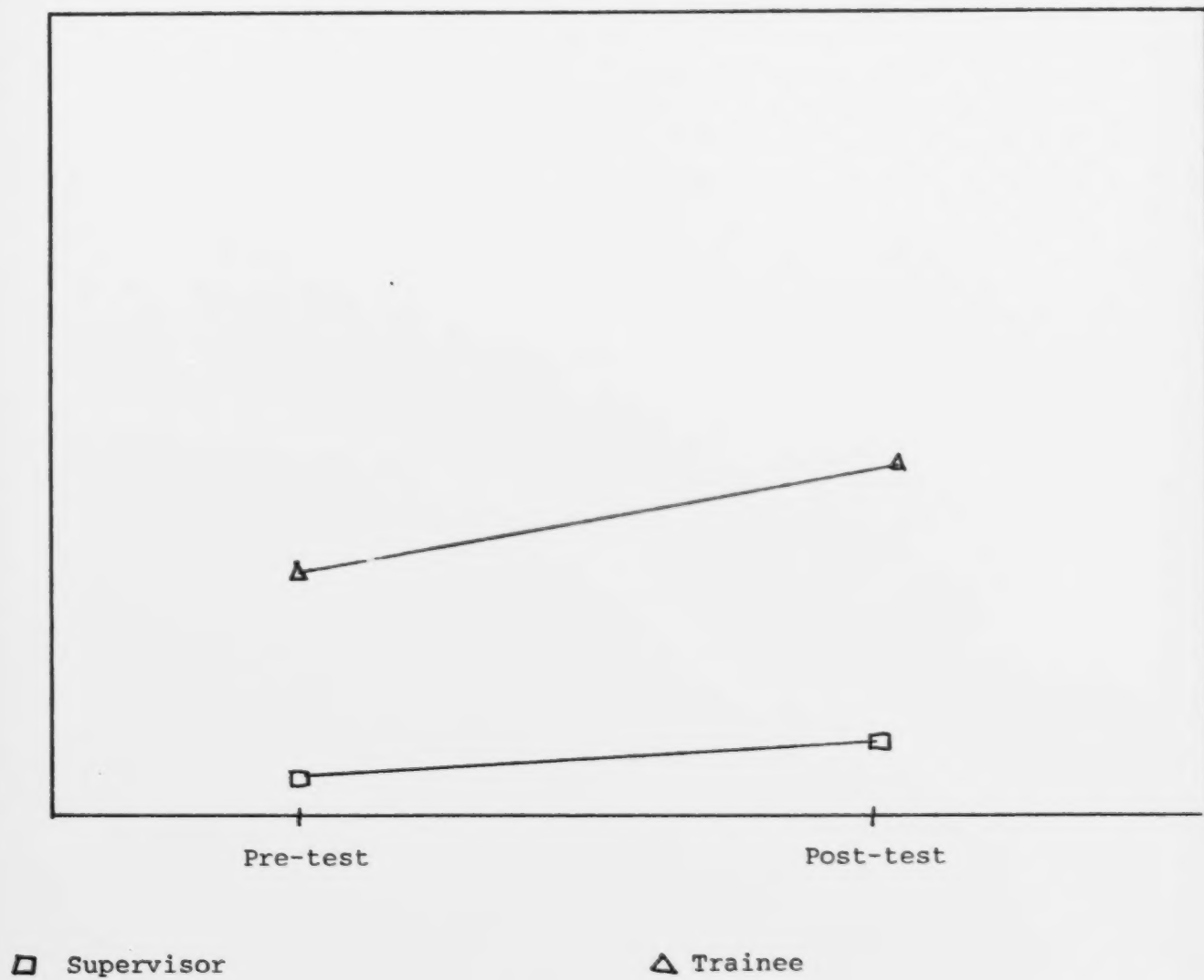
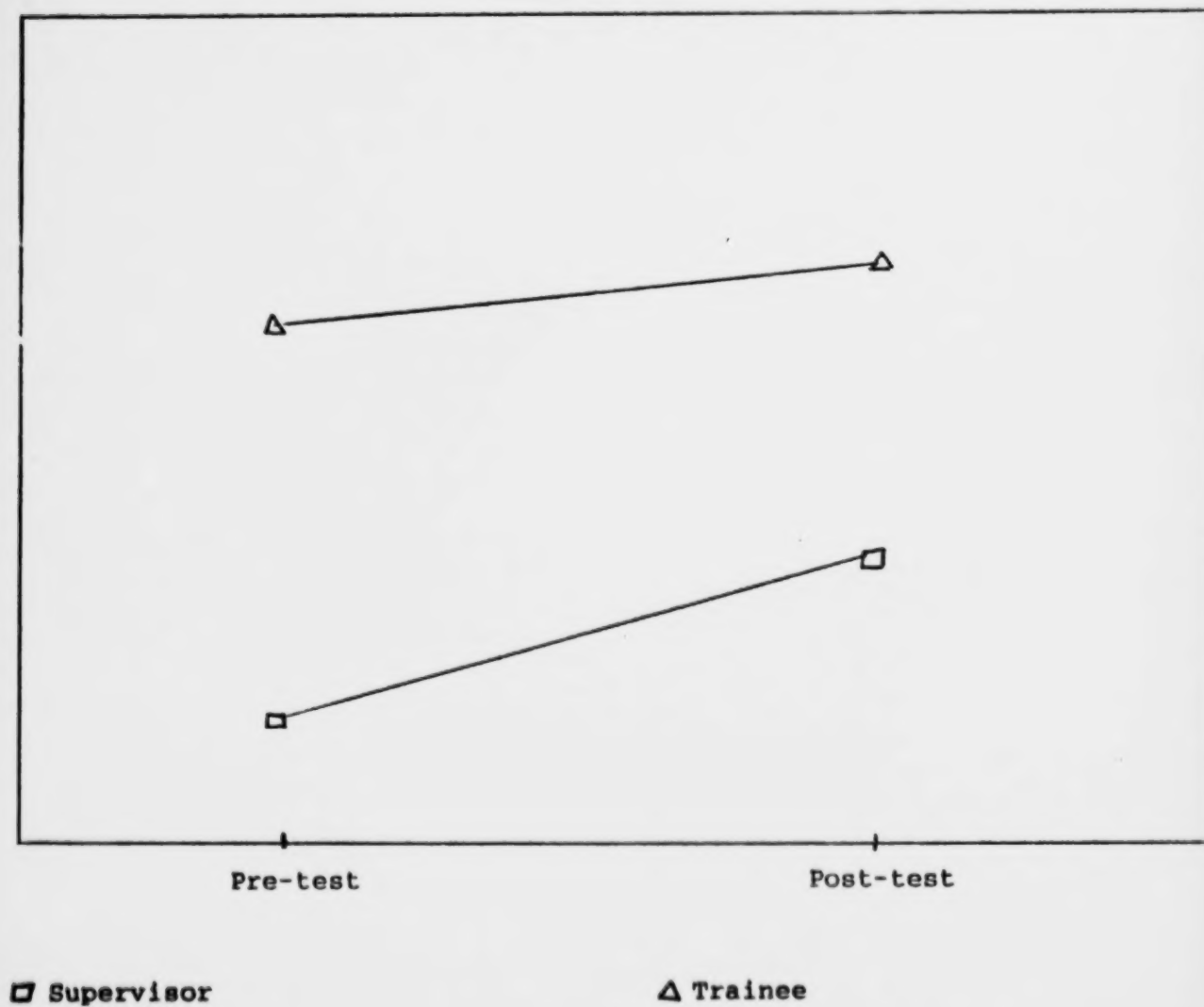


Figure 4. Total SLQ Score



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